

U.S. COAST GUARD
MARINE SAFETY OFFICE PORTLAND, MAINE

SAFETY ALERT

Warping Winch Injury Hazard

A fisherman operating from Wells, Maine suffered a serious injury September 30, when his right arm became entangled on a warping head while recovering a lobster trap. The fisherman's arm was amputated above the elbow in the accident.

The vessel involved was a 19-foot skiff powered by an outboard engine. The vessel, which did not have a hydraulic system, was equipped with a 5 HP gasoline engine fitted to a warping head that was used to recover traps.

The accident occurred when the line became over wrapped on the warping head. To clear the fouled line, the fisherman intended to stop the gasoline engine, which would secure the winch. While reaching across the winch to access the engine shutdown switch located inside the operating console, the fisherman's oilskin jacket became entangled in the line on the warping head.

The turning action of the equipment pulled the fisherman's right hand onto the warping head, crushing it between the wraps of 3/8" line. As the fisherman's hand was pulled onto the warping head, a high torque feature of the equipment engaged, which further pulled the man onto the warping head and amputated his arm above the elbow.

The equipment arrangement in use was not fitted with a clutch or emergency engine shutdown control within immediate reach of the operating station. The only control in place, the engine shutdown control, required the fisherman to place his arm in the vicinity of the warping head.

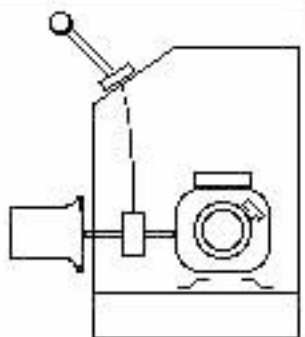


The warping head used to haul the trap line became fouled with crossed turns. The fisherman attempted to secure the engine by reaching for the engine shutdown located behind the small access door located between the warping head and the helm.

Commercial fishermen operating with similar hauling gear are advised to make immediate modifications to their equipment to prevent similar injuries. Modifications should include addition of a clutch control or an emergency engine shutdown that is immediately available and easy to operate without having to reach in the vicinity of the warping head.

Emergency controls must be within reach of the warping head for use in the event of entanglement. Ideal safety precautions would also allow the fisherman to back away from the fouled warping head and secure the equipment from a safe distance. A fouled warping head is an extremely dangerous situation that can result in serious injury or death. This type of entanglement injury can occur very quickly, leaving little time to react. Proper equipment design and operating procedures are essential to avoid this type of accident.

Warping heads should be fitted with controls that allow fishermen to immediately stop the rotation of the warping head under all service conditions. This control should be positioned within immediate reach of the operating station.



For further information on this Safety Alert contact:
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